Jas. M. Otis Esq.

Piety — Usefulness — Peace.

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A

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH OF MR. BENJAMIN STRONG;

DELIVERED IN THE

PEARL STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW YORK,

FEBRUARY 9, 1851.

BY

REV. A. A. WOOD,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

NEW YORK:
WILLIAM S. DORR, PRINTER, 101 NASSAU STREET.

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79 Leonard St., Feb. 10, 1851.

Dear Sir,

It is the unanimous feeling and desire of the family of the late Benjamin Strong to keep some record, for themselves and their children, of his eminent virtues, useful life and peaceful end, and they deem your beautiful and touching discourse delivered on last Sunday, so appropriate to this purpose, that they would esteem it a very great favor, if you would furnish them with a copy for the press.

Hoping you will feel at liberty to comply with this request,

We are most respectfully yours,

EDWARD A. STRONG,
OLIVER S. STRONG.

Rev. A. A. Wood.

New York, Feb. 11, 1851.

Gentlemen,

Although the discourse, to which you so kindly refer, was not prepared with a view to publication, yet, if it will be in any degree gratifying to the feelings of the bereaved family, or in your opinion, be the means of leading any to imitate the piety and virtues of the beloved and venerable man who has passed away, I cannot hesitate to submit it, with all its imperfections, to your disposal.

I remain, very truly, yours,

A. A. WOOD.

Messrs. Edward A. Strong,
Oliver S. Strong, Esq's.

SERMON.

ACTS, XIII: 36.

"FOR DAVID, AFTER HE HAD SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION, BY THE WILL OF GOD, FELL ON SLEEP."—

In the midst of a most triumphant argument for the Messiahship and resurrection of Christ, the apostle gives us in this sentence an account of the life and the death of David, the king of Israel.

While there are some things in the history of this distinguished monarch, that may well cause us to weep over the corruption of our nature,—things that filled no heart with such bitterness and contrition as his own; there is that also in his character which must cause him ever to be regarded as a faithful servant of God. The Scriptures often speak of him as a type of the Messiah, and we find much in the comparative obscurity of his birth, his early occupation, his signal victories, his prophetical office, and his kingly elevation and crown, which looks forward to, and finds its counterpart in his divine descendant and Redeemer. His life was strikingly

eventful. A shepherd boy, he was sought out by the special direction of the Almighty, and, though the youngest of his father's house, anointed king of his chosen people. Victorious over the giant champion of the Philistines, he was hailed by the shoutings of thousands as Israel's deliverer, and again, a fugitive from the abodes of men, he was hunted for his life from cave to cave by Israel's king. Raised to the throne of the Jewish people, he healed the discords, reconciled the jarring interests, and appeased the jealousies of the rival tribes—formed them into a united state, and extended his conquests from Egypt to the Euphrates. While in the greatness of his prosperity and power, he was driven from his capital and throne before a rebellion headed by his own son. He was brought back again in triumph, but it was by a victory that pierced his heart with anguish, and bowed his head in the dust. He spent his last days in preparing for the building of the temple of God; and finally, full of honors and of years, giving his last counsels of wisdom to his son, he calmly breathed out his life. As a *Monarch*, his reign was signally illustrious. He seems to have been the chosen instrument of fulfilling the Divine promise made centuries before to the great ancestor of his people; for it was by means of his brilliant and successive victories, that the territory from "the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates" came into their possession.

As a *Statesman*, his course was marked by rare prudence and sagacity, both in the internal administration of his kingdom, and in his intercourse with foreign nations. But it is as a *saint* and *servant of God*, that his character is most worthy of our attentive consideration. Few of the children of men ever sought more earnestly the direction of heavenly wisdom than he, and few have been more constantly under its guidance. With the most ardent and irrepressible longings, his soul seemed to seek the presence and communion of its Maker. God was his refuge and strength, his sun, his shield, his confidence. As the Psalmist of Israel, he has given utterance to every expression of religious feeling. The spirit of piety, in every age and country, has caught up and repeated, as her own, the words in which he poured out his soul before God. Sometimes in the rapture of devotion, and treading the world beneath his feet, we hear him saying, in the words of appropriating faith, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee?" and, sometimes, sinking in the depths of affliction, we catch the words, "all thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." Now, there is the struggling with temptation, and the burst of penitential sorrow; and now, the summoning of the whole creation to join him in his anthem of praise. Here, there is the throb of a bleeding heart; and there, the balm of heavenly consola-

tion, as "peace like a river," pours itself over the troubled soul.

Of him it is told us, that, "having served his own generation, by the will of God, he fell on sleep." We may consider the words as illustrating a good man's life. They point us to—

ITS RULING PRINCIPLE:
ITS USEFUL COURSE:
ITS PEACEFUL END.

I. The *ruling principle* of such a life is set forth before us in the brief but comprehensive words, "*the will of God.*"

Christ, our Divine Redeemer, who came to earth as the example and teacher of a sinning race, lived in perfect obedience to the Father's commands and in perfect submission to his will. The great rule which governed all his conduct has been disclosed by him in words whose spirit ever dwelt in his heart; "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." And, if the sinless Son of God kept ever before him the will of the Father as his rule of action, much more is such a rule necessary for all, who, conscious of their ignorance and guilt, seek to walk in his steps. When a man is made to see himself a creature of probation and an heir of immortality, called in his weakness to work out the

great problem of life or death, he feels the absolute necessity of spiritual guidance. He finds himself not only ignorant of many things which God would have him do, and thus in darkness as to the way of duty; but, what must occasion still greater solicitude, he is made painfully conscious of an utter disinclination to duty. Notwithstanding all his resolutions and efforts, he finds a "law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity." Discovering nothing but darkness and weakness within, he is led to look out of himself for wisdom and grace. He reads in the word of truth the direction, "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God," and he lifts up his prayer for light. We see this in the monarch of Israel. On the one hand, as he glances at the vast extent of duty and obligation, we hear his prayer, "Lead in me in thy truth and teach me;" and, on the other, looking over all his past short comings, and overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, he exclaims in an outburst of penitential sorrow, "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." When the revealed will of God comes to such a man, it finds a heart disposed to recognise its authority. It is something to be understood indeed, but something also to be obeyed and loved. It is received as a divine rule of life, given by one who well knows the wants of

his creatures, to lead them into all happiness,—all holiness, all truth. Hence, there will also be an earnest and faithful effort at conformity to its requirements. There will be not only a willingness, but a wish to live under the Divine government, and to submit to the Divine direction and disposal. As there is a yielding up of self to God, so there is a choosing of Him to reign in and over the soul. This is ever a distinguishing characteristic of true piety. The Christian commits his ways unto the Lord;—at all times, and under all circumstances, seeks to acknowledge Him. It is Abraham, surrendering himself to the leading and disposal of the Divine Providence. It is Job, acknowledging the hand of God in all things, and blessing His glorious name alike in the giving and the taking away of his earthly treasures. It is Paul, going forward in the path to which God had called him, knowing nothing of the final issue, save that bonds and afflictions await him. If temptations assail such a man, he is ready to say, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee." If the array of duty staggers him, and leads him to ask, "who is sufficient for these things?" he can yet exclaim, "I will run in the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Darkness may settle down upon his prospects, but he still has the assurance that God's word is "a light to his path." Yea, in the hour when sore trial

shall come, and his soul cleaves to the very dust, he has it still to say, "I hope in thy word, hold thou me up and I shall be safe." And though the deep waters of affliction are ready to engulf him, it is yet permitted him to look on God as his refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

And with this recognition of the authority and submission to the will of God, there is the spirit of *active and universal obedience.* With a devout and solemn apprehension of the Divine presence, majesty, and truth—with a faith which unites the soul to Christ, the living and glorious Head—with a hope which, as an anchor of the soul, "entereth into that within the vail,"—such a man has on earth an intimate communion with God, and holds his conversation with things unseen. Regarding all the requirements of duty as coming from the same Divine source, sanctioned by the same authority, and tending to the same blessed and glorious end, he esteems God's "precepts concerning all things to be right," and has respect unto all his commandments. He knows the will of God to be everything that infinite righteousness combined with infinite goodness can prompt, and he would obey it, however it may cross the desires of his heart, or thwart the purposes he has cherished. Asking for no exemption even from the hard service or the heavy burden, he is ready to say "Thy will be done." And yet, he has often occasion to lament the imperfec-

tion of his obedience. There is much in every retrospect which causes him to bow in the deepest humiliation, and exclaim, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord." But it is ever his purpose to obey God rather than men—to live for eternity rather than for time—to lay up treasure in Heaven rather than upon earth. In the following out of this purpose, you will find him making it the great business of his life to "seek first the kingdom of God,"—to live for Him—for His honor and glory. He gives himself indeed to the duties of his station and his calling. At all times, and in all places, he seeks whatsoever things are just and honorable, lovely and of good report; but it is mainly because such is the will of his Heavenly Father, and he would in all things "adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour."

It is the "*will of God*," by the communication of his grace, that implants the principle of holy living in the soul. It is the same will which gives law to the life thus implanted; communicating the faith to apprehend the truth,—the heart to love, and the strength to obey it.

II. Let us consider the USEFUL COURSE of such a life.

While, as has been said, the great purpose of life on earth is to do the will and promote the glory of our God, the particular way in which the purpose is to be carried out, will be modified by the condi-

tion and circumstances of each individual. This is implied in the text, whether we take the words as they stand, or adopt the marginal reading, which speaks of David as having served the will of God in his generation. In either case, we have the same great rule of life, but a rule which finds its particular application, according to the sphere in which we are called to move. David was an illustrious example of this, as the ruler of God's ancient people; and others, at whose graves we have wept, have also shed the mild lustre of their virtues over the more private stations which they were called to fill. But whether he be prince or peasant, magistrate or subject, the heir of wealth or the child of poverty, the servant of God will aim to be actively useful. He "seeks first the kingdom of God," by making it the object of his life to promote the Divine glory in the well-being of man. He lives in a world over which sin has spread its blight, and where suffering has its home. He has ever in his eye the glorious example of Him "who went about doing good." He would tread in his steps. He would be a minister of consolation—a messenger of mercy. He goes to wipe the tears of sorrow, to cause the heart of the desolate to rejoice. The friendless and the orphan find in him a father, and the blessing of him that is ready to perish comes upon him. God has appointed his servants their sphere of labor on earth, that they may do good.

There is scarcely an expression in his word, with reference to the Christian life, which does not imply this. It is "a work," "a warfare," "a service," "a holding forth of the word of life." It is bearing the fruit, spreading the leaven, exhibiting the light of which He is the Author. And the course of the believer will be an actual carrying out of this active principle. It will be, in all holy and benevolent effort, to toil in the vineyard, to fight the good fight, to be faithful in the service of his Lord; for it will be his to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and to "let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father in Heaven."

And yet this course of usefulness will be *modest* and *unobtrusive.* It is neither the spirit of Christ nor of Christianity to sound a trumpet before its alms deeds, or to do any of its good works to be seen of men. It is not the noisy and ostentatious philanthropist who is most useful. You shall see the torrent chafing itself to foam, as it dashes from rock to rock, filling all the air with its spray and its brawl; but you look in vain for the fields to which it has given verdure and beauty. And you shall also see the gentle streamlet, fed by some perennial spring, often hiding itself away from the sight, but whose presence may be always known, and whose course be always traced by the strip of richer greenness above it, and by the flowers that

adorn its water courses. It is the course of Christian usefulness. You find it not so much in the gathering cloud and the strong wind and the pouring shower, as in the early dew, whose silent coming is unheard by even the sharpest ear, and you only know that it *has* come from the freshness and beauty with which it has new-spread the earth.

The full extent and value of such influence may not be known until all the things of earth and time are revealed in the light of eternity. And yet, when such a man is suddenly removed from the sphere which he so worthily filled—when the poor miss their helper, and the inexperienced their guide, and all their friend—when the places of usefulness and honor, of affection and confidence, which he once occupied know him no more, then we begin to appreciate the blessing by being made to feel its loss.

It is a course of *continued* and *increasing* usefulness. There is an accumulation of all the elements of usefulness with every advancing year of the Christian life. You will find a ripeness of experience, a largeness of practical wisdom, a soundness of judgment, and a comprehensiveness of charity to mark the progress that has been made in the school of Christ. As, on the one hand, there will be a stronger and more unquestioning faith in God, and a more simple and absolute reliance on the merits of Jesus; so, on the other, will there be more earnest

and entire engagedness in the work of doing good on the earth. The one has prepared the way for the other. The increased experience and the matured wisdom of years, the habits of holy and benevolent activity, that have become only more invigorated by constant exercise, cannot fail to produce their appropriate effect. You will see it in the more steadfast devotion to duty, in the greater self-denial, in the unhesitating obedience to every precept which calls for the bearing of the burden and the taking up of the cross after Christ. Every department of benevolent effort feels the active co-operation of a more efficient helper, and the Church finds him a strong and beautiful pillar in the earthly temple of her God.

But we narrow the meaning of the word usefulness quite too much, when we confine it to the external duties of religion. The great author of Christianity often speaks of the peculiar work of his disciples as being the easy and natural manifestation of the new principle which he has planted within them. "Ye are the light of the world." "Ye are the salt of the earth." The light is to be seen. The salt is to be felt. There ever goes out a gentle and silent, but benign and powerful influence from such a character. We are in danger of overlooking this indirect usefulness of the child of God. And yet, it is a usefulness which not only continues, but seems increasing even to the close of life.

When we hear the Psalmist lifting up his prayer, "Now also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power unto every one that is to come;" when, as he looks over the scenes of his past life to say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works,"—and, casting the eye of faith onward to the future, he exclaims, with reference to all that may be yet before him, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God,"—we may know that the season of Christian usefulness has not passed when the ardor of youth and the vigor of manhood have gone. It is the characteristic and the privilege of the servants of God to be useful even to the close of their earthly course. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age,"—yea the richer and more abundant fruit, because they have been so long "planted in the house of the Lord," and have flourished "in the courts of our God." The example of one who has long held fast the profession of his faith, and walked humbly with God will exert an influence for good which you may look for elsewhere in vain. The words that he utters may be few, but his testimony for religion will come with all the weight of years and wisdom. He lives and moves before men, a practical demonstration of its reality, its excellence and its power. His example will be felt even to the latest hour of a consist-

ent and exemplary life. He has gone "from strength to strength" in duty and in faithfulness, until, leaning on the arm of his Almighty helper, he is ready to appear before God in Zion.

III. From the *ruling principle* and the *useful course* of such a life, we come to consider its PEACEFUL END. The royal Psalmist, "after he had served his own generation by the will of God, *fell on sleep*."

Thus beautifully and tenderly, does the Scripture speak of the saint's departure from earth. And where could there be found an expression which implies so much of the placid serenity that is shed over the last hours of the man of God? Much of beauty and of interest there is in the sight of one, just awakened to a sense of his condition, and a consciousness of his spiritual wants, giving himself humbly and faithfully to the will and work of God on the earth. But it is a spectacle of deeper, sublimer interest, when it is permitted us to behold one, who at the close of a life of humility and prayer, of humble effort and faithful service, can say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me at that day." Such a man was "Paul the aged," a prisoner, waiting for

a martyr's crown. Such was Simeon, lifting up his prayer for a peaceful departure, since his eyes had seen the infant Redeemer. Such too are all that have been followers of those "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The aged saint has reached a point where he can say, the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world by the cross of Christ. The friends of his youth have fallen by his side. Many—possibly all of his family circle have gone before him to the grave, and he is left solitary in his habitation. One by one, have the ties which bound him to earth been severed, and while its scenes become more distant and dim, the heavenly world draws nearer. There he has long since laid up his treasures. There he has set his affections. There is his *home.* Calmly indeed he may wait the hour of his departure. It need occasion him no alarm, when he feels within him tokens that his earthly tabernacle is about to be dissolved, for it is permitted him to lay hold of the rich assurance that he has "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Active and useful to the last, claiming no exemption from duty on account of age or infirmity, anxious to consecrate even his latest strength to his Lord and Saviour, he continues serving God in his generation, until the evening of life brings its still shadows around him. Earth has been his place of labor and of service: he looks for repose only to the "rest" that remaineth "to the people of God."

And when the last hour shall come,—though it come suddenly, and give no warning of its approach,—though you begin to feel alarmed only when death has already done its work,—though there is no answer when you call, and no look of affection meets your weeping eye; yet there is that, in the hallowed serenity of such an hour, which bids you, in eloquence more deeply impressive than words can utter,—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace."

"So God giveth his beloved sleep." It is the sleep of security, for it is watched by the eye, and guarded by the arm of Jesus. It is the sleep of hope and of peace, for the sustaining grace of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life enables the departing saint to say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

You will have already anticipated me, in the application of this subject to the life and character of the revered and lamented friend, who has so recently passed from among us. I am aware that I speak to those, most of whom had the privilege of knowing him longer and better than myself, but I am sure there is not one who will not delight to bear testimony to the controlling power of his piety, to his life of usefulness, and his end of peace.

As we think of his *Christian character*, though I have known little of his personal religious experience, and though he was not a man to speak often

of his religious feelings, yet there was enough in his every day conduct to show an overruling regard to "the will of God." It has been my privilege to look over some memoranda, evidently intended for no other eye than his own, in which he often expresses his sense of conscious unworthiness, his humble reliance on the mercy and merits of Christ, and his ardent desire that God would enable him to live more entirely to his glory. I remember that in seasons of personal trial, and once, in particular, on the occasion of general commercial embarrassment and disaster, when the whole city was filled with distrust and gloom,—in the midst of which, the house of God where he worshipped was destroyed by fire,—the record of each disastrous event concludes with some expression of unshaken confidence in God, or some earnest prayer that "the Lord would dispel the gloom, and good come from it to the souls of men." And when I had these outbreathings of the soul of our departed father and friend before me, I could seem to see the hidden spring of all that was so consistent and exemplary in his Christian life. I had witnessed a cheerfulness of piety that seemed ever to look up with filial confidence to our Heavenly Father,—an interest in religious things, and an activity in religions duty, that knew no remission or coldness with the in crease of years.—I had seen his seat in the sanctuary and at the prayer-meeting filled, when others, younger and more vigorous than he, found occasion

to stay away.—I had known of his peculiar delight in commemorating the death of his Saviour, and had thought that, possibly, he might not have acknowledged to himself, or to others, any sense of physical infirmity, which should prevent him, perhaps for the last time on earth, from sitting at the Lord's table. I had heard from those who knew him in the family circle, of his seasons of regular retirement for religious exercise,—and from those who had known him longest in the Church, of his zealous and watchful care for her interests—his faithful devotion to her service, his firm support and open hand in her hour of darkness and trial. And when I have turned from these fruits of piety to the principle that produced them, I have seemed to see it in the grace and the love of God. Making a public profession of his faith in Christ in the year 1811, he was ordained an elder of the Presbyterian Church in Cedar Street,—the late Dr. Romeyn's,—in 1819. He united with this Church in 1827, and was installed elder in 1834.

If we have to speak of the power of his piety, we have also to speak of his *life of usefulness.* It was his felicity to be endowed naturally with a peculiarly equable and happy disposition, that shed its sunny radiance over every circle in which he moved. He was affable and engaging in his manners, and, to a remarkable degree, considerate and attentive to all about him. He possessed, to a rare extent, the faculty of winning the affection

and confidence of others. The little child would instinctively recognise him as its friend, and feel assured of his kindly sympathy. And since he has gone to his rest, I have heard from more than one of our citizens, a grateful testimony to the interest he took in their welfare, and the important aid he cheerfully rendered them in the early struggles of their business life. As the spirit of kindness was in his heart, the law of kindness was on his lips. Never have I heard him speak ill of any one, and those who have known him many years, are ready to say that they never heard any one speak ill of him. And, yet, with all that was amiable in his character, there was also an unwavering firmness and decision in every thing which his convictions of duty required. Coming to this city at an early age, he evinced such capacity for, and attention to business, that when only nineteen, he received an appointment to office in the Treasury Department of the United States; a post which he resigned the following year, and while yet a minor, commenced business for himself. Such however, was the confidence in his integrity and efficiency, that his credit from the outset was never questioned.

It would be interesting and instructive to go over the whole course of his long and useful life. I might speak of his many years of active service connected with the Fire Department of this city, during eighteen of which he acted as its Treasurer, and

where his efficient aid and conciliatory course had the happiest influence. I might point you to the different monetary institutions with which he was connected—to which he brought the same strict integrity,—the same activity and skill which marked his whole life; and from the offices of which, now that he is gone, have come the highest testimonials to his character and worth. I might tell you of the different and responsible trusts committed to his keeping, which he managed with a wisdom and fidelity that reflected the greatest honor upon his character; while in all he proved a father to the fatherless,—a guardian and friend to the helpless and infirm. I might remind you of his long and faithful service as one of the earliest Managers of the American Bible Society, and his active participation in the great work of supplying our whole country with the word of God. And I might also speak of his connection, both as Trustee and Director, with the Princeton Theological Seminary, to the permanent endowment of which he contributed both by his influence and his means. And then I might bid you remember the numbers who gathered at his funeral, and followed his coffin to the tomb, all of whom felt that they had lost a benefactor and friend.

But we must turn from the spheres of usefulness which he filled to the closing scenes of his earthly course. I need not remind you of the impressive

exercises of that Sabbath when we last met him in the sanctuary, and sat with him at the sacramental table. The season is fresh in your memory. Perhaps the thought was in his heart, as he moved from seat to seat, bearing the memorials of the Saviour whom he loved, that when he should next drink of the fruit of the vine, it would be with Him in His kingdom ;—perhaps he rejoiced, even then, in the hope that his next Sabbath might be spent in heaven. The day of God passed away ;—the morning brought him almost his usual vigor, and the hour of business found him at his work. It seemed but a slight indisposition that called him to his home, and laid him on his bed. The eyes of affection which had so closely watched him, were quick to notice any change, and the heart to take the alarm ; and yet, with perhaps something of restlessness and something of pain, there was little to awaken apprehension. Calmly and cheerfully he said his last "good night," and requesting his son who watched beside him, to read to him from the word of God, he composed himself to sleep. It was the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. "Let not your heart be troubled."—It was in beautiful unison with the Sabbath service in which he had just been engaged. And, as those sweet words of Jesus went on, "In my Father's house are many mansions—I go to prepare a place for you—I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also,"—may we not believe

that the mind was already away among those sublime realities—and though the eye of sense was closed to earthly things, the eye of faith was opened to the glories of those "mansions" which were so soon to be his everlasting home. A moment more, and the reader came to the words, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Wonderful union of the Christian with Christ—of Christ with God!—"At that day"—It was the hour of night, but the *day* had come—the day which knows no darkness and no sorrow. There was a struggling breath—a gentle sigh—and the silver cord was loosed—the golden bowl was broken, and the spirit passed from listening to the words of Jesus on earth, to abide forever in his presence on high. "After he had served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep."

God has spoken in His Providence. He speaks to the *bereaved.* On the one hand, he holds up before you the example of the departed, and calls you to walk in his footsteps, so far as he was a follower of Christ; and, on the other, he is telling you that all that you revered and loved has only passed from a scene of sorrow and of sin, to a world of light and of glory; while even the body which you have laid so sadly in the grave, is in the care of Him who is the "Resurrection and the Life." He speaks to the *aged.* One of your number, whose life had seemed a happy exemption from the in-

firmities and decay of fourscore years, has passed to the grave before you. O, that ye may live ready for the coming of your Lord; that "the hoary head, found in the way of righteousness," may be to you also "a crown of glory." He speaks to this *Church.* One of her strong pillars has been torn away. A standard bearer has fallen. We look to the seat which he so regularly occupied in the sanctuary, but we miss his beloved and venerable form; we go back to the place where we laid him, and we mourn that we shall see his face no more. God grant that, in the removal of the earthly prop, we may lean more fully on the everlasting arm; that we may so profit from the religious character and useful life of our friend and father, that it may be ours also to pass from the table and service of God on earth, to His presence in heaven. He speaks to *all.* He tells you of sudden death. He warns you that you know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." We hear the voice; we would heed the teaching.

Tearfully, hopefully, we lift up the prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

MEMOIR.

As a memorial to his friends—as the best legacy to his descendants, as a faint expression of their reverence and love—the children of Benjamin Strong offer this slight sketch of his life and character.

He was born on Long Island,on the 14th of April, 1770, at Mount Misery, (now Oakwood) the homestead of his family for more than one hundred years. He was the second son of the Hon. Selah Strong, of Setauket, who was the sixth in descent from elder John Strong of Northampton, Mass., one of the early Puritans who came to New England in 1630. Reared in the seclusion of an isolated farm, his early education was only such as could be afforded by a country school—and to obtain even these advantages, for several winters, he was obliged to walk ten or twelve miles every Monday, and return in the same way on Saturday. But the memory of his school days was always pleasant to him, and he often dwelt upon the kindness of an old couple with whom he, and a younger brother boarded, although their excessive caution denied even the indulgence of a candle to light them to bed.

At the age of thirteen he came to New York and entered the Counting House of his brother-in-law, Mr. James Woodhull, in whose family he was domesticated. He arrived in the city in July 1783, and in November witnessed the evacuation of the British troops, and the entrance of General Washington and his officers. His description of General Washington's grave and dignified

deportment, and the worn appearance of the American soldiers, made this one of the most interesting reminiscences of his life. He always spoke with indignation of the English, who on quitting the city, greased the Flag-staff, and cut the halyards, so that it was only with much labor, and after a delay of several hours, that the American flag could be displayed; while from the decks of their ships, by the aid of their glasses, our ancient enemies witnessed the many ineffectual attempts, and the final success.

He soon gained the confidence of all who knew him, by his capacity for business, his great regularity, and his devotion to the interests of his employer. In the year 1789, by the influence of his father, then a member of our State Senate, a clerkship was obtained for him in the Treasury Department, just established, with Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury, and Oliver Wolcott as Auditor. He entered on this employment in compliance with the wishes of his father, and (residing part of the time in Philadelphia) remained in it until the year 1791—when at the earnest solicitation of his brother-in-law, he returned to New York. In March 1791, he commenced business on his own account, although still under the age of twenty-one, which circumstance he always mentioned when buying goods on credit.

In February 1792 he married Sarah Weeks, of Oyster Bay, L. I., with whom he lived more than fifty-one years; during the whole of which time, the love and confidence of each were unshaken. Of remarkable sympathy in dispositions, the respect and love which she ever evinced for him, and the tender regard he manifested for her, while it made the earlier part of their married life, one of entire confidence and harmonious effort, rendered the evening of their years, a season of blessed repose and enjoyment. Of eight living children born to them, seven survive, to bear witness to the beautiful example of every domestic virtue, so constantly exhibited.

He continued in active business on his own account

until the year 1809, when he accepted the Presidency of the New-York Sugar Refining Company, whose affairs he conducted until 1831, at which period the Company was dissolved; having under his management paid a good interest on the investment, and a final dividend returning the original subcription with a large advance.

After the dissolution of this Company, he was solicited to accept the office of President of the Dry Dock Company, which he held from 1833 until near the close of 1837, when he resigned. During his connection with this Company, which was also a Banking Institution, the financial difficulties of 1836 and 1837 occurred, and his anxieties had been so great during this disastrous period, that he resolved in future to confine his services to institutions of a benevolent character. Having been one of the founders of the first Bank for Savings (in Chambers Street) and actively engaged in its management, he was elected President of the Seamen's Bank for Savings, and continued in this office for sixteen years, until the time of his decease. The estimation in which he was held by the Trustees of this Institution is strongly shown in the reliance always placed upon his judgment, and the warm personal attachment manifested towards him, by every officer connected with the Bank. In both these Institutions he took the deepest interest, never absenting himself from his post, and serving in his turn of duty until his death. He was for the greater part of this period, an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Trustees of the Seamen's Retreat, and gave to that also, his untiring and conscientious attention.

In the early part of his residence in the city, he enrolled himself in a militia company, and was on duty on the day of General Washington's Inauguration as President. But when on occasion of the 'Doctor's Mob,' he was ordered on service with ball cartridges, he determined never again to expose himself to the risk of being called upon to shed the blood of a fellow-creature, and he accordingly entered the Fire Department in March 1791. He served

as Fireman, Foreman of Company No. 13, and Engineer for thirty-one years, long after the legal term of service had expired. Ever active and energetic, from his long service, and the popularity gained by his pleasant and kind demeanor, he was able on many occasions to exert a most beneficial influence upon this rather excitable corps. Through his means principally, the Charitable Fund of the Fire Department for the relief of the widows of deceased Firemen, was originated, and he held the office of Treasurer for many years. The war with England occurring during his connection with the Fire Department, and the Sugar Refinery, he aided in person at the erection of the fortifications on Long Island, in 1814, both at the head of a body of Firemen, and with the German laborers employed at the Sugar House.

In the year 1798, by the death of his brother-in-law, Mr. Woodhull, he became the guardian of his two children, and also, of a posthumous son by a second marriage, who was hopelessly idiotic. To the children of his sister, he became a second parent, receiving them into his family, watching over their settlement in life, and at their death regarding their offspring with a like tenderness and affection. The unfortunate imbecile was placed under his particular care by the Committee appointed by the Chancellor, and to his watchfulness he owed all the comfort his unhappy situation permitted. The care of his estate also devolved upon him, and on the death of the idiot about forty years afterward, the slender portion of $9,000 had augmented to beyond $110,000. During the whole management of the estate, he never lost one dollar by a bad investment. He never failed in frequent visits to the idiot, and watched over his comfort and health with conscientious solicitude, which the unfortunate repaid by evident manifestations of pleasure in his presence.

He was educated in the Presbyterian belief, and attended the Brick Church, then in connection with the (First) Wall Street, and Rutgers Street Churches. He was for

many years the Treasurer of these Churches, and was regular on the first day of every month in the payment of £50 to each of the three clergymen, Drs. Rogers, MacKnight and Miller. In 1808 he aided in the establishment of the church in Cedar Street, which was placed under the pastoral charge of the Rev. Dr. Romeyn. To the communion of this Church, both himself and his wife were admitted, on confession of their faith in the year 1811. He held the office of Treasurer during the whole period of his connection with the Church, and was ordained as Elder in 1819. In 1827 he left the Cedar Street Church, and connected himself with the Pearl Street Church, in whose communion he remained until his death. He was installed as Elder in the latter Church in 1834. During his connection with the Cedar Street and Pearl Street Churches he was frequently a delegate to the General Assembly. He was also both a Trustee and Director of the Princeton Theological Seminary, and one of the first Managers of the American Bible Society, of the Executive Committee of which latter body, he was for many years an active member.

In 1843 he lost the partner of his long course of joys and sorrows. Although it bore heavily upon him, he sustained himself with his usual equanimity, seeming only to attach himself still more closely to his children and family, and taking to his heart with all the warmth of tenderness which had characterised his earlier years, each new claimant on his affection. He delighted to gather all his descendants frequently around him, under the old roof which for nearly forty years had been his home, and even the youngest crowded around his knee, with the same pleasure as his children had done in former days. In April 1850, by the request of his children he celebrated his 80th birth-day, on which occasion he received the visits and congratulations of a large circle of relatives and friends, and although but few of his contemporaries were left, he found he had not outlived the respect and affection of the present generation. The memory of this day

will always be fondly cherished by his family. He retained his powers of mind and body in an astonishing degree, and was as regular in attendance at Church or at his place of business as the youngest. His only dread of advancing years, was lest his life might be prolonged beyond his activity and usefulness. During the last five or six years of his life, he had several severe attacks of illness, but, on the whole, enjoyed excellent health. The week preceding his illness, he had suffered somewhat from a cold, although not apparently a severe one. He had gone as usual to his business, every day save one, and on Friday dismissed his physician, considering himself free from illness. On Friday evening he attended the preparatory lecture, and on Sunday assisted at the Communion Table, but was observed by some to move more feebly than usual. On Monday morning he declared himself quite well enough to go to Wall Street, but returned between one and two o'clock, complaining of pain in the chest, a sensation of weakness in the arms, and great prostration of strength. A timely application of stimulants seemed to revive him, and he rallied so much, that neither his physician or his family saw any cause for anxiety. At half past eleven o'clock he desired to be left to the care of his son, and while listening to the words of the Saviour, whose precepts had been the rule of his life, passed peacefully into the land of spirits. He expired at ten minutes before 12 o'clock, on the 27th of January 1851, at the age of 80 years and nine months.

From this sketch of the life of Benjamin Strong, it will be perceived that its course was unmarked by any extraordinary incident or startling vicissitude, a career singularly fortunate and peaceful, when it is considered that it extended over so long a period of time, and that too, one of the most eventful in the world's history. But the qualities of mind and heart, which while living obtained for him, universal admiration and respect wherever he was known, and have embalmed his memory in the hearts of his kindred and friends, were indeed remark-

able. The hand of affection falters, when it attempts to portray his character, but it is believed that nothing will be said of him, which would not be approved by the most impartial observer.

In person, he was above the ordinary stature, in early life measuring six feet, well and finely proportioned, of an erect carriage and firm step. The well developed and noble outline of his head, with its silver locks, its expanded brow and fine features, all softened and beautified by an expression of mingled benignity and intelligence, have marked him for many years in this community, as one of the valuable relics of our earlier times, whom all desired to know, and loved to contemplate. His manners partaking somewhat of the precision of the old school, without its formality, were singularly pleasing. Attractive to the young, from the entire absence of austerity; deferential to the aged, but especially to the good; courteous and encouraging to those who sought him for aid or counsel; and affectionate and playful in the family circle. No dread of want of sympathy ever deterred either the young or the humble from approaching him; and no fear of repelling severity ever silenced mirth or repressed innocent enjoyment. Habitually serious in character and purpose, he was yet equally cheerful and even tempered; and indeed the frequent relaxation into not only a quiet participation in social pleasures, but the hearty indulgence of mirthful good humor, were marked features in his temperament.

The admirable equipoise of his powers, moral and intellectual, was that which most distinguished him from his fellow-men. In his character there were no inconsistencies to be reconciled, no glaring defects to be offset by splendid virtues, but a symmetrical and harmonious whole, so delicately blended, that the ordinary observer was in danger of overlooking its intrinsic beauties from the exquisite proportion of each part. But on a closer scrutiny there were exhibited these prominent traits, a sound judgment, an ardent patriotism, an unobtrusive

piety, a disinterested and ever active benevolence, a most conscientious discharge of every duty, and a glowing warmth and tenderness of affection combined with a cheerful and happy demeanor in the highest degree at tractive to all.

Gifted with an instinctive sagacity, which enabled him to grasp all subjects presented for his decision with singular promptness; he became early in life proverbial for the vigor and maturity of his judgment, and as he advanced in years, this quality of his mind, combined with his well known integrity, gave an almost judicial sanction to his opinions. His advice, in difficult emergencies was eagerly sought by those who knew him, and always freely given, and so unerring were his judgments that in all his associations with his fellow-men in the various institutions of a commercial, benevolent, or religious character, with which he was connected, though never seeking himself to lead, his wisdom was ever the guide of the others. His decisions, once formed, were adhered to with a firmness that was not obstinacy, but the result of a rigid sense of right and wrong, that would not allow him to deviate from a course once chosen. Yet with all these elements of true greatness, there was a singular modesty and simplicity in his character. He complained of none who opposed his judgments; he found fault with none who could not be persuaded to think with him.

He was devotedly attached to his country. The pure flame of patriotism kindled in the times of Washington, burning steadily through a long life, was only extinguished by his expiring breath; with an unbounded confidence in our institutions, he always, even in the darkest times, expressed an unshaken reliance on their stability. Though a Federalist in the early days of the Republic, and a Whig of the present times, he never allowed his judgment or his feelings to be biassed by mere party views, but in the great questions of the day, showed the same moderation and freedom from prejudice which characterised his other decisions; and in a

spirit of enlarged patriotism, regarded ever the general good of his country as paramount to the advancement of particular interests.

His pure disinterestedness was one of the most beautiful traits of his character; the evidence of this is to be found in the records of the various benevolent institutions with which he was connected. Never seeking office, he did not shrink from the most arduous and responsible duties, which, when assumed, he discharged with the strictest fidelity. No business or pleasure of his own was ever allowed to interfere with an engagement of this nature, and although proverbially reluctant to ask aid of any, yet ever prompt to officiate in the discharge of another's duty. His life was one of continued action, not a busy restlessness, impatient of repose, but a quiet, steady appropriation of his time to all the demands upon it, and whether in business or pleasure, in religious duties or benevolent engagements, he was methodical and punctual to a degree rarely excelled.

But it was in the family circle, when surrounded by his children, even to the third generation, and his kindred however remote, he looked and moved like a patriarch of old, that his virtues shone brightest, and his affections found their sweetest exercise. "How," to use the language of one who knew him well, "instead of retiring into himself did he delight to go and see this daughter and that, and to keep the chain of family ties all bright by the watchfulness and sympathy of incessant intercourse. Alas! alas! the 'silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl' of family joys broken!" Ever ordering his household in a manner suited to his station, he yet avoided everything bordering upon display, and with a warm and generous hospitality welcomed under his roof all who had any claim to his attentions. Simple in his habits, and self-relying, he preferred to sacrifice his own convenience, rather than impose upon others any service involving his personal comfort, though grateful and tender-

ly sensitive to acts of kindness and love from those who found their highest pleasure in rendering them.

His religion was fervent, unobtrusive, liberal. Making Christ his model and exemplar, he was a daily suppliant at the throne of divine grace, for aid to enable him to follow in his footsteps. Reading of the Scriptures at regular periods, was at all times a most pleasing duty, and during his later years, never omitted, except from ill health, and then, nothing could be more gratifying to him, than to listen to them, when read, evincing a tenderness of feeling, and susceptibility to the truth, touching and beautiful in the extreme. While his energy and sound judgment were remarkable in all he undertook, in matters of religious interest, these qualities seemed to be characterised by an unwavering firmness, a devoted perseverance and an abiding faith, which no discouragement nor difficulty could baffle or subdue. Still in the language of a friend—"He was one of the very few who rested in the consciousness that goodness and integrity would sooner or later work out their own satisfying results, so that however others might be filled with fear, lest the ark should be taken, he doubted not, but that 'all things would work together for good—to them that love God.' How much freedom this gave him in council! and how much generosity in action! It was true faith in the government of God—true faith exemplified in the life." But although the religious sentiment was so deeply interwoven, as it were, with his very being, he was entirely free from any thing like austerity or asceticism. With an unwavering faith in his own form of belief, he never questioned that of others, but taught by that "Charity, which thinketh no evil," he extended the hand of sympathy and fellowship to all who bore the name of Christian. Guided in his charities by the injunction not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth, his many acts of kindness and sympathy were only known through the recipients of his bounty.

In conclusion, it may be said that the single aim of

his life was, to achieve—not *greatness* — but *goodness*. To be a good man was his highest ambition.

And if this faint and imperfect tribute to his memory shall inspire any, with a desire to look to his example and walk in his footsteps, it will not have been written in vain.